



KENT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2015

Contact: Lisa LaPlante – 616.632.7182

Dangerously Cold Weather Prompts Warnings from Kent County Emergency Management & Health Department

GRAND RAPIDS – Arctic air is expected to blast into Kent County in the coming days, with the potential to bring record low temperatures and wind chills could reach -35 in the coming days. The Kent County Health Department and Kent County Emergency Management urge residents take every precaution possible with these extreme cold days and nights.

“Be aware of the conditions outdoors, even if you only plan on going outside for a few minutes,” said Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator. “Check on your family members, your friends, and your neighbors, especially those who are elderly. The cold can be especially harsh on young children, people with pre-existing medical conditions, and seniors.” Respiratory issues can occur from breathing in cold air, such as asthma attacks. Be sure children with asthma are wearing a scarf when outdoors, and if they appear to have trouble breathing, get them to a warm, sheltered area immediately.

“Frostbite sets in quick, especially in small pets and young children, when we see negative wind chills,” says Adam London, Administrative Health Officer of the Kent County Health Department. “If you are going outdoors, wear layers of light, warm clothing, mittens or gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. And keep a close eye on children.” Symptoms of frostbite include redness, numbness or pain, white or grayish-yellow skin, or skin that feels unusually firm or waxy. Frostbite most often affects the extremities: nose, ears, cheeks, fingers, or toes. If the person appears to be very tired or lethargic, is having trouble breathing or talking, shivers or fumbles his or her hands, or seems confused, call 911 immediately. Try to keep the person warm until help arrives.

If driving in these conditions, make sure your car has more than enough gas to reach your destination. Keep a cell phone and phone charger in the car, and keep an emergency kit and blanket within your reach.

Keep pets indoors as much as possible. Make sure they are on a leash or in a fenced in area when they need to relieve themselves. The smaller the pet, the quicker the cold impacts them. Puppies and kittens are especially sensitive to the cold, as are older pets. Watch out for community cats that might crawl under the hood of your car to keep warm. Bang loudly on the hood before starting the car, and never leave pets in a car during the winter. Temperatures can be just as cold inside the car as they are outdoors.

###